

VERTICAL FILE

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# INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

TO

## A COURSE ON OBSTETRICS,

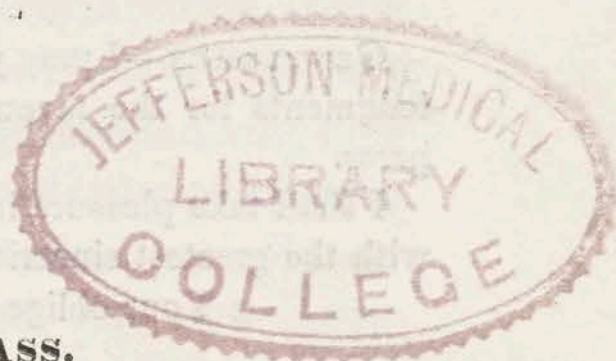
DELIVERED IN

JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE,

NOVEMBER 4, 1841.

BY CHARLES D. MEIGS, M. D.

Professor of Obstetrics.



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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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PHILADELPHIA, Nov. 15, 1841.

RESPECTED SIR—In accordance with the will of the Jefferson Medical Class, manifested at a meeting held on the 12th inst., we, the undersigned, were appointed a committee to request the favour of a copy of your singularly interesting and beautiful Introductory Lecture for publication.

In performing this duty, the Committee beg leave to add their own personal solicitation to that of the Class, hoping that the request may be granted.

With sentiments of respect, we are

Yours, &c.

D. T. TRITES, of Pa.,  
B. F. REA, of Geo.,  
G. B. WEISER, of Pa.,  
J. E. FORD, of Va.,  
H. M. WHITAKER, of Ky.,  
J. BRINGHURST, Jr., of Del.,  
E. B. RICHMOND, of N. J.,  
E. BROWN, of Ohio, and  
W. H. SCOTT, of Pa.,

*Committee.*

To C. D. MEIGS, M. D.,  
Prof. of Midwifery, &c. &c.

PHILADELPHIA, Nov. 16, 1841.

GENTLEMEN—I pray you to present to the Class my most respectful acknowledgments for the favourable opinion of my lecture which you so kindly express.

I shall take pleasure in furnishing the lecture in question, and am, Gentlemen, with the greatest sincerity,

Your obliged and respectful friend and Preceptor,

CHAS. D. MEIGS.

To Messrs. D. T. TRITES, B. F. REA, G. B. WEISER, J. E. FORD, H. M. WHITAKER, J. BRINGHURST, Jr., E. B. RICHMOND, E. BROWN, and W. H. SCOTT, *Committee of the Class.*



11/14.  
Franklin Bache Esq. g

## INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

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GENTLEMEN:

I have been appointed by the authorities of this Institution to give public instruction to its classes upon one of the important departments of Medical Science and Practice.

In assuming, for the first time, the office of a public Professor, or instructor in Medicine, it appears to be in every view proper for me to say a few words as to the pretensions by which I hope to gain a share of your confidence as a Teacher. I ought not to say those words in order to boast of any supposed advantages I may have enjoyed, nor to set forth an array of arrogant demands upon your premature regard; but that, as a stranger to most of you, I may solicit your calm and dispassionate judgment upon me, not at this present instant of time, nor indeed, until the progress, or even the close of the course shall enable you to decide for yourselves, whether my pretensions to this honorable station have some just and solid foundations, or whether they have none at all.

With these views, then, I shall proceed by saying to you that I have been conversant with medical affairs since the year 1809, near one-third of a century, at which period I commenced the study of medicine under the roof of the late Thomas Hanson Marshall Fendall, of Augusta in the state of Georgia; a gentleman who had attained in that state the highest distinction as a medical practitioner; a distinction to which he had the soundest claims, not only on account of his very perfect medical education, but also on account of the extraordinary sagacity and judgment with which he appreciated the most hidden symptoms of disease at their real value; and the bold, decided, and skilful hand with which he seized and applied the proper remedies. He was my earliest teacher, and I cannot let this first public occasion pass by, without availing myself of it to say of him, that an extensive and long acquaintance with medical men since that day, leaves me at liberty to declare that I have not met with a gentleman at all his superior as a physician—one more deeply imbued with a real medical sense—possessing more fully



the *tactus eruditus*—nor one into whose hands I should more cheerfully commit the lives of my family, my friends, or my own, in dangerous circumstances of disease. Death loves a *shining* mark, they say, and my master and kind teacher was early stricken down in the midst of a brilliant career, a loss to the profession and to the country which had the benefit of his talents and skill during his useful existence.

In the course of prosecuting my medical studies I had the happiness, gentlemen, to hear the last course of lectures delivered by the American Sydenham. Why the American Sydenham?—one greater than Sydenham—I mean the late Benjamin Rush; of whom it may be said with truth, that he was *medicorum Americanorum omnium, facile facile princeps*.

The eloquent accents of that venerable man seem to fall upon my ears even now, when I turn back my thoughts to those young days filled with aspiring hopes and fond anticipations of success and professional distinction. I see him now, surrounded by 500 young men, my fellow students and fellow citizens from every part of our wide-spread country, each one gazing intently upon that reverend countenance, wrinkled with age it is true, but still ruddy with temperance, and radiant with the smile which showed how charming is divine philosophy that sat enthroned upon a brow of the rarest benignity and beauty. I see that good old man erect himself in his chair, upon which, on account of his great age, he was accustomed to sit at his lecture. He puts back his glasses on his forehead—he rises from his seat, and leans with his aged hands upon the desk—he looks abroad over the whole mass of faces and says, “gentlemen, *silence!* I rise from my seat for a special object—I desire you all to remember, that upon this day, I stood up before you while endeavoring to impress upon your minds the necessity of opposing the very beginnings of disease—in order that I might pronounce these two words in your ears—*OBSTA PRINCIPIIS, OBSTA PRINCIPIIS.*” Those words sunk ineffaceably into every man’s memory—you hear me repeat them at the distance of twenty-nine years; and it was by such methods as this—by some graceful wave of the hand, by some forcible gesture of the body, by some most apposite illustration, that he endeavored always to impress deep into the plastic material before him, that signet of his intellectual power whose traces are still visible in the *Mens Medica* of these United States—which I firmly believe, is extending its nature and kind, as



a good leaven that leaveneth the whole lump, beyond the Atlantic wave.

There, too, I heard the lessons of the fiery Barton. He had a head that seemed chiselled as by a sculptor, so firm and unwavering was it in its resolute expression. He came there scrupulously dressed, and exactly punctual, to pour the rich and fertilizing stream of his discourse, while his face often became the express image of his sentiment, as he felt the warm and generous glow of Linnæus' zeal at the prospect or the hope of some new medicinal herb. When he told us of opium,—of its talismanic properties, and its baleful powers, the tears coursed down his sympathetic cheeks and ours, as he related the history of the immortal Brown, his early friend—his meteoric fame—his shining intelligence—his dark, and dreary, and dismal fall and death. And then he would gather himself up again, to criticise the doctrines of Cullen, and Murray, and many others, and to urge, urge, urge upon us, the results of his own experience in the therapeutic properties of the preparations of lead, or the nature of American medicines; whilst it was a delight and an honour to sit at his feet and listen, as he poured his lay, almost poetical, over the dry and barren fields of the *Materia Medica*.

But there was a Gamaliel there at whose feet one might be deemed happy to sit even all the day long.

Yes, it was a happiness to sit there, and catch the droppings of that rich fountain of precious knowledge—knowledge that man prays for when his friends, his wife, his child, or when he himself lies prostrate under the assault of an imminent death, or an insupportable anguish. That knowledge that then has no limit to its value, which is impayable, and which man can neither beg nor borrow nor buy; which he can only earn. It is like some bright jewel in a deep and darkling mine. There it lies deep, deep, hidden, low, the prize of patient toil and protracted assiduity: a thousand and a thousand strokes of the axe must win the way to that precious gem; tons and tons of useless ore are to be turned aside before you seize it, all radiant as it is, and glowing with its own pure and proper light: but you seize it at last, and wear it on your brow, where it shines broader than a phylactery, more resplendent than Barbaric gems, or pearls of Ormus or of Ind. It is science—it is sagacity—it is judgment—it is charity—it is love to man—of which that priceless jewel is combined. None win it but he worthy. *Palmam qui meruit ferat*, was the motto of that great



teacher, for such was the man who wore that precious gem, our Gamaliel in that by-gone day.

Look at that great amphitheatre, crowded to the outermost ring. No stamping of noisy feet indicated the impatience of a crowd for the arrival of a tardy master. No—at the *point* of time he entered the area. He came, with that cold eye, which you could neither bear nor forbear—its light was different from that of common men. He came with that face of pentelic marble—that hair powdered and dressed in the most finished manner—that blue coat with its metal buttons, closed on his breast on account of his delicate health. There he stood silent for a moment. You would as soon think to cheer a statue, or applaud at the marble features of a corpse, as to have raised your voices in praise or blame where Dr. Physick stood. He opened his mouth after a cold salute, and from thence proceeded choice words of wisdom, which we were too anxious to gather up in our garners of note books, to stop for a moment to see what other men were doing, or imagine what they were thinking, for so great was our trust in what he should say, that we received it as a gospel; and truth to speak, no word of folly or frolic did I ever hear proceeding from the lips of that great man, who deemed the business of dealing with men's lives and teaching others to do so, one of such solemn and dreadful import that there was no place in it for glee or laughter; and so he acted, and so he always looked—he lived so, and he died in that belief. Dr. Physick was a very great man, gentlemen: You had an indefeasible tendency to stand uncovered in his presence. There was a spotless purity in his character, so that he walked as in a bright cloud of moral truth and beauty. Apollo, the god of physicians, seemed to have inspired the nobleness of his countenance, and to have imparted somewhat of the *mens divina* to his whole moral constitution. You and I may live long, gentlemen, yea, and our children after us, before so rare a combination of great and admirable qualities shall again conspire to produce the perfect pattern and model of a surgeon and physician.

But why have I not yet spoken of *him*, the beloved of the class! By what epithets shall I attempt to particularize those singular good qualities, which, by a happy conspiracy, united to make up the character of that good old man—the idol, the darling of the classes? Do you not see that powdered head of his, with its well-adjusted locks and queue? Dr. Wistar enters the area, followed by a cloud of witnesses, bowing often, and rubbing his hands, and with a face on



which sat a pleased and yet bashful expression—a mixture of emotions which gave it a most peculiar character,—chiefly delightful, however. He came there amidst sounds of greeting, and the wreathed smiles and looks of exchanged congratulations of the superimposed circles. Men witnessed his entrance as they witness the completeness of preparation for some great feast; there was a satisfied feeling already, like that with which a company inhale the rich perfumes and odours of a feast that is set.

He lifted his hand, and in a very short, quick expression, he said, *Gentlemen!* Henceforth all was still—a profound silence, broken only by the arrival of some tardy student, which was regarded as a wrong done to the whole company, and a rudeness to be visited by frowns, or even more decided marks of disapprobation, particularly if the white-haired teacher should stop in his career to look around the sky-parlours. Ah, gentlemen, those were the halcyon days of medical instruction!—days ever to be remembered. But those good men are gone off the stage of the world. The eloquent voice of Rush is silent where he lies yonder in his grave; and Wistar sleeps among the undistinguished dead of his sect, in that ground to which I followed his remains—one of a vast concourse of his fellow-citizens, treading with mournful steps, and slowly, the way taken by the dead body of a public benefactor. I felt that day—grieved as I was to part for ever with one who had gained my whole esteem and reverence—that I was honoured in being a physician, for my profession was exalted and honoured in his life, and by the public testimonials to his worth and many virtues rendered at his death.

There, too,—and why not place him in the front rank of the men of that age?—there, too, was the beautiful Dorsey, with a face as bright as the morning, and open as noon-day. An ambition of the highest reach urged him onward in a career that was nobly run, and would have carried off the highest prize, had he been spared to the country. Conquering by the most arduous struggles certain natural impediments of his elocution, he had just attained the perfect victory. He had just stepped on a lofty stage of action, when the angel of death struck him down too, that he might, though young, belong to that great age of American Medicine. He came not down to our times, but was gathered to his brethren and his like. He sleeps here among them. The American Sir Astley, is a title which he deserved, not more by the graces of a most ornate mind and manners, than by the great surgical skill and renown which he so early vindicated to himself.



But I have not spoken of my good friend, Dr. James—Thomas Chalkley James, Professor of Midwifery in that day—a member of the Society of Friends,—a *good man*. There are many persons here, I suppose, who remember the quiet, calm, gentle, modest style with which he came out into the rotunda to meet us in the afternoons. He brought there written lectures filled with learning, ransacked from the whole stores of that time, and arrayed for us into an order and a show that made them always delightful,—garnished, as they were, with apposite classical citations, whether from the ancient or modern authors. He brought, too, the results of a great experience in practice. He brought there, also, his modesty, which never left him from his earliest youth, and which frequently sent the mantling blood over cheeks and brow to testify that he had the deepest sense of the delicacy of the task assigned to him—that of exposing to hundreds of young men, those trembling secrets of the lying-in chamber, which he had blushed to learn, and which he more redly blushed to tell. Take him all-in-all, and you shall search long and far before you shall find a more honourable, upright gentleman—a riper scholar—a better teacher, or a better man.

Such were the days, and such the men, when I studied medicine here, near thirty years ago, in the venerable University of Pennsylvania. Whether I learned any thing good, or well, from them, it behoves not me to say.

From that time forth, I entered into the strife of the world; and years have fled, like a river of which the poet says, "*labitur et labetur*," and a thousand and a thousand cases of disease, in all the classes, ranks and conditions of society, have fallen under my observation and care; until, from their very number, I seem to have encountered every thing, particularly in Obstetrics, that might be able to astound the susceptible mind—to that degree, indeed, that nothing seems longer new, nothing admirable, nothing surprising. I may venture to say, that my clinical experience in Midwifery ought to have been sufficient to teach it to any one not absolutely stupid by nature, and that the current of my experience is now sufficient to teach me that art, even had I never learned any thing of its theory and practice before.

I have thought proper to make the foregoing relation, not in order to ask from you at once, and without further time for making up your judgment, a favorable decision on my pretensions: all I desire is, that you consent to receive me as a teacher, upon the



foregoing grounds, until you shall have had time enough to decide whether there be arranged in my mind that orderly and seriatim knowledge of my art, which is requisite to enable me to set before you, in clear declaration or irrecusable demonstration, those doctrines and facts of my branch, which my obligations call upon me to make.

Having said so much of myself, let me now ask you a question! What motives have you for coming, many of you from great distances, to study Midwifery, and the other branches of Medicine? Do you know what is Midwifery? Have you given due thought to the claims this department has upon your time, your assiduity, your conscience? Let us see what it is.

In the first place, midwifery does not consist in receiving a child from the mother's womb—wrapping it in a napkin, and then handing it to some wise woman, called nurse—or *nussy*. No, no! Far from it.

An accoucheur ought to be conversant with all the physical, moral, and intellectual peculiarities of the sex. He ought to be a complete physician. He ought to be profoundly versed in the history, causes, nature and cure of all diseases, of all conditions—young and old, rich and poor, bond and free. He ought to have acquired a special insight into the numerous moral and physical affections of the female resulting from her peculiar organism and functions in the great scene of life, whether national, social or domestic; whilst by a sort of generic complexity, there will fall under his special protection, every one of those infantile disorders, by which young children pass through the various crises and dangers to which their tender age makes them liable.

Hence, it appears that he must be, in the first place, a good physician, in order to qualify himself fully to become a good accoucheur or obstetrician. Let me here assure you, that the peculiarities of the female constitution, and the susceptibility of young children, render them liable to so great a number and variety of disorders that it is fully worth your while, in view merely of the gainful consequences of such knowledge, to give much time and the most special attention to the study of them. By her reproductive system the woman is altogether different from the male; by it she is rendered always tremblingly alive to those modifications of irritability and sensibility that spring from that regent and dominant authority, that God has set up in her constitution. *Ob solum uterum mulier id est quod est.*



A medical gentleman who is much engaged in midwifery practice, may be said to have devoted his life to the treatment of the diseases of females. I mean not mere sexual disorders—for women send for him for headach, pneumonia, for bilious fever, and for everything, almost: hence it happens that he comes to be more fully stored with needful practical knowledge, than one who confines himself solely to the business of a practitioner of physic. And it must be so!!—since he can't escape, in general, even if he would, from assuming the responsibility of all sorts of cases, which are charged upon him, because parents and relations, who find him prompt to know and cure the disorders confided to him, in the lying-in room or the nursery, soon begin to think that he is worthy to be trusted everywhere, and under all circumstances.

In saying these things, which I believe to be fully true, and very necessary for you to know, I mean certainly no offence or disparagement to my brethren, distinguished and able practitioners of medicine, many of whom have, in some parts of their lives, been engaged in midwifery practice, and proved how true it is that that business leads rapidly into that of the more aristocratic general practitioner.

Give up, then, I pray you, Gentlemen, the crude and erroneous notions you may have imbibed as to the simplicity and unity of the affairs belonging to the Department of Obstetrics.

If you ask me whether the study and practice of that branch may lead men to distinction, I answer, yes! as much even as surgery itself. Who are the eminent men of England in medicine? Are there really better names than that of Wm. Smellie? Yes! Then say who towers like a giant above that of William Hunter—those of Denman, the Clarkes, or Collins. Are there names in France of greater renown than those of Mauriceau, Delamotte, of Levret, of Baudelocque, Velpeau, Cazeau, or Moreau?

Is not Asdrubali an honour to the medical republic of letters in Italy? Are not Siebold, Joerg, high names in Germany? And to what American name is attached a greater American or European renown, than that which belongs to Dewees, whose opinions are cited in every volume on our art that comes from the teeming presses of the world? You must admit that it opens to you the prospect of a noble career of usefulness, and honour, and public confidence. What more? If you strike, strike here, for here is the highest mark and the noblest prize.

Now, I have a very serious proposition to offer for your consi-



deration. Have you supposed, as I used to when young, that this work was fit only for old women, and not at all adapted to the energies of the manly mind? and have you asked at the door of your conscience—that inner apartment of the soul's temple, whose Shechina flames as bright as day, and as long as you live—have you asked that conscience whether you are bound to make yourself ready and competent for a high and sacred responsibility? Come, go along with me, not in a magnetic clairvoyance, confused and dim, or foolish, or wicked. Come, I am about to open a room, which my station as teacher gives me the privilege to open for your admission. I am going to lead you, with your eyes open, and in all seriousness and soberness, to a lying-in room. Did you ever set your feet inside of such a sanctuary as that! Tread softly! Here is the door. Look, how beautifully clean those walls and ceiling are; a lady's glove is not fairer. See that nicely carpeted floor! those window-curtains of beautiful fashion, to exclude the flaunting lights of the world, which must have no intrusion here, where the lights should be soft and dim. Observe that bed made up, with its snowy pillows, and its beautiful hangings of silk damask! Take a white kid glove upon your hand, and see whether you can find the smallest particle of dust, or the least remainder from the last sweepings and dustings of the well-bred housemaid. There stands a wardrobe of the richest form and materials, burnished and bright; and here—come on this side!—in the second drawer from the top of this exquisite bureau, which I open for you, she has secretly, but with sweet smiles, the harbingers of a new hope and a new happiness for this whole house, put carefully away all this beautiful array of worked caps and frocks and bands and slippers, with colours, as you see, like a bright parterre, of ribands of every hue—blue, and pink, and white, and green, and red, and purple,—all adapted by her own taper fingers when alone, or the welcome gifts of her many loving and anxious friends. Here they are! and no man's eye has seen them before, waiting to be selected by the nurse, or by some good aunt, when that happy hour shall have come that brings with it deliverance and safety, congratulations, sobs of happiness too great for the bosom to contain, and the sweetest sensations of human complacency in the finished, concluded, and blissful result of a long-tried and holy love.

Such, and so careful and *recherché*, are the preparations and arrangements for an expected confinement, that it is really quite an agreeable spectacle to look upon in reference to the moral asso-



ciations connected with these events, and which lend to them a charm so truly poetical, that the ancients were happy to reduce them into a physical and sensible and visible expression, by the invention of the divine Psyche, the soul, the object of such tender affection by her lover. A true and sacred affection, purified and mundified of the dross and corruption of the human nature, must be like that of this exquisite fable—a purely psychological ens or quality.

But let me proceed with my story. Let us look farther into some of the events of the profession you are about to make!

The first signal is given; the hour anxiously looked for, and even longed for with fear, has come at last, and the signal of its arrival is pain. She is gone to that chamber, and she trembles and grows pale, that young and beautiful thing! Yes! she trembles, and is amazed at the newborn sensations that have seized upon her frame. Her consciousness, her teleological sense, teaches her that a crisis is at hand; and the whole house is aroused to a sort of excitement and perturbation, which soon is communicated to those friends and relatives whose inquiries have been lately repeated more and more frequently. The busy, kind-hearted and bustling nurse, is summoned where she sits at home, with wisdom and prudence brooding on her brow, waiting for the summons, as she has been every day for a *week* or *more*. Her little bundle is soon made up, her trunk is packed, and away she hies to carry with her some assurance of safety, much positive comfort, and the hope of a most prosperous getting up, at least.

The pain comes again—and again it grows severe, and every eye is turned with tenderness and compassion upon that young and beloved girl, when she sits in the great arm chair and bears or tries to bear that which cannot be borne. At length the plot thickens; events are at hand which require the controlling and guiding hand and the instructed head of the physician. Let us stop here. That beautiful creature, in the great crisis of nature, is an only daughter,—the object of the concentrated affections of parents and relatives. To form her manners—to lend grace to her natural beauties—to guide her flying fingers over the cords of the harp or piano—to teach her strange tongues—to attune her voice to the compositions of Boyldieu, of Mozart, of Rossini and Bellini—to adorn her person—thousands of pounds have been expended, and sleepless eyes have often watched and waited for her return from the party or the ball, the scene of the



triumphs of her beauty ; and here she is at last, caught in the toils, destined to pass through pains like those of a crucifixion, and to incur hazards against which the Church has ordained a set form of prayers. What vast interests—interests of the heart—are here put upon the hazard of the die ; and you, sir—or you—or you—are summoned to stand betwixt her and those agonies, those dangers, or that death, which stands with his cold and bony hand poising the dart aimed against that priceless life ! Will you take all this responsibility upon yourself ? Will you go there to that sacred apartment, where man never trod before, save the privileged one ? and are you ready to say, come what may, here am I ! There is nothing here with which I am not familiar as with household phrases and the most trite occasions. Beware what you do ! Enter not into that sacred precinct, unless with the loins of your mind girded—with your lamp of knowledge trimmed and burning—with that gem of the mine flashing on your brow—knowing, feeling, conscious that you are equal to the grave duty you assume. If you can truly say, I know that duty—I know it as well as it can be known by mortal man—then go and stand like the priest of Lucina, and your offering of science, of skill, of sagacity, of humanity, will be an accepted one ; the victim, bound and crowned for the sacrifice, shall go free like another daughter of Clytemnestra at Aulis, for your vow is fulfilled.

Yet again let us take a further view of these mysteries. You arrive, and a feeling of renewed security comes along with you. You speak words of calm and assured confidence. You exhort that lady to bear the pain with patience and hope, and you take your seat to observe the progress of this curious scene.

The labour goes on, and having acquired the needful information, you make your announcement of a favourable and speedy termination of the distress of that beautiful creature. But you are disappointed : the affair lingers—she becomes restless—she tosses from side to side—groans and cries proceed with sobs from that bosom which never felt a pang before ; and that countenance is flushed and swollen, which, before, the winds of heaven had never visited roughly. What is the matter ! “ The pain—the pain—the pain ! I shall never recover—I cannot endure all this—my head aches ! ” There you sit, sir—for you know that the face is to be flushed in labour, and the pain is great and the patient naturally restless. She rises on her elbow and says : “ Doctor, what is the matter ? I cannot see you. Oh, how my head turns !—how it aches ! ” “ Never mind it ; have patience. You are nervous—don’t be nervous—the child



is almost born. You will soon be well." There, sir, you have fallen into an impassable and bottomless gulf of regrets—you have plunged that lovely woman headlong down, and she is now irretrievably destined to lie, as Shakspeare says, in cold obstruction and to rot—and that happy home is desolate—that temple of peace is broken down, for its idol has fallen, and shall disappear for ever from the gaze of those eyes that have been fondly bent upon it for so many years.

The child is not born ; but in an instant—in the twinkling of an eye—horror has seized upon all the occupants of that chamber. The sounds of running feet—the accents of wo, wo, wo, are heard, and a wild confusion has suddenly succeeded to the quiet of that chamber, which before was broken only by the moans of that lady, approaching to the supposed consummation of her happiness. A loud and hissing sound, as the hiss of a thousand snakes, issues from her now livid and distorted mouth—those eyes, which it were heaven to look upon before, are rolled in opposite directions or protruded to bursting from their wide-open sockets. That brilliant brow is overspread with a dark livor ; and that breath, like new mown hay, is but a succession of frightful explosions, scattering foam and blood in every direction, dabbling the bright hair, or flecking the exposed and agitated bosom ; while the wildest and most fearful convulsions wrench and torment those beautiful limbs ; and there she lies, that lovely one, as if the prey of fiends, delighting to tear and rend and reduce that image of grace to their own frightful and abominable deformity. What is all this, gentlemen ? It is no fancy sketch—it is a sober and imperfect representation of the horrors of a lying-in room, where a beautiful woman is seized with puerperal convulsions—a common occurrence—and which I appeal to the respectable gentlemen here, is among the dreadful events of the life of a surgeon accoucheur. You ought to have prevented it, sir, or you ought to seize with a lightning rapidity upon the indications. You ought to be able to say to all this confusion and tumult, "Peace, be still ; *I* am here, I shall extend all the relief that is possible. All the resources of art are in my hands : peace, be still." Here is the demand for that knowledge which men *pray* for. There is no gibe for the physician now. No : he alone has the skill and the knowledge which cannot be begged, borrowed or bought—it must be earned.

Gentlemen, I do not desire to turn you aside with a feeling of aversion from the meeting with these great responsibilities. I wish rather to excite in your minds a high spirit—a spirit of emulation to earn that skill that would make you stand calm, serene, im-



movable amidst such scenes—the only mind not distraught with such a mighty catastrophe. Make yourselves like Dewees or James, like Hunter or Baudelocque, like Collins or Velpeau, firm, calm, dispassionate, able to confront and subdue in the most difficult, the most dreadful contests with the destroyer of the home, the beauty, the glory of our race.

But a truce to these sad details! Turn we now our attention to things more pleasing. Let me assure you that the means for gaining the needful information, the skill and dexterity which you shall require, are ample and sufficient to that end. The resources of medicine go back to the remotest ages, and we have in printed volumes the results of the researches of the human race for twenty-five centuries. Men of the most philosophical, of the most gigantic intellect, have devoted their lives to the investigation of those anatomical truths, and those physiological principles which illustrate and explain the whole nature of obstetric science, and it could not be, nay it cannot be, that so many great and noble minds should have wrought fruitlessly during so many ages. Day after day, new discoveries are made, and the modern press teems with the harvest which is perpetually reaped in Great Britain and France, in Italy and Germany, so that a full and an overflowing feast is spread for those who desire to partake.

It is, besides, not difficult: it requires only steady industry, patient assiduity and fixed attention, with a conscientious regard for the obligations you assume, when you step forth on the stage of action and proclaim to the community among whom you settle—I too am ready.

In order to acquire this precious knowledge, it will be necessary for you to proceed in a regular series of observations, commencing with the structure of the organs concerned in obstetric practice, and investigating their several functions as you proceed. Some parts of the study will seem very dry and unprofitable to you perhaps, but I bespeak beforehand, your patient endurance of whatever may seem so dull and uninteresting. When it shall become my duty to hold up before you an amorphous and apparently useless mass of bones, bearing no seeming beauty or adaptation in their whole structure, do not avert your eyes, jumping to the conclusion that there is nothing there fit to detain your attention or to attract your regard. I tell you, that if it were not for this pelvis our art would not exist. It would not be among the things required for the use of man—for the benefit of the human race. You must study it, dry and doleful



as it may seem. In it is that deep mine of knowledge in which you must delve if you would not be startled and horror-stricken by some of the shocking occurrences of Midwifery. Give it then a patient and devoted attention. Make yourselves masters of this, and you have already conquered the enemy of your future fortunes; but, even here it is possible to enliven the task by illustrations drawn from the diseases and accidents which spring from its peculiar conformation, and it shall be my endeavour to spread along your course such garlands as I may be able to pluck, with which to adorn and embellish the victories we may win together in this labour of love to our race and our country. May I not fondly hope that among you there are many men who, years hence, in distant places of our happy land, when my voice shall have become trembling with age, or hushed in death, are destined to be looked upon as the monuments of American science, while your names shall descend with your fragrant memories, or the rich productions of your pens, to the remotest ages, among the Rushes and Bartons, the Wistars and Chapmans, of whom that beloved country is already proud when she hears their venerated names.

In the progress of our studies we shall avail ourselves, Gentlemen, of the materials of our Museum to bring under your view the preparations, whether natural or artificial, that may be needed to illustrate and enforce the doctrines and facts that it may be necessary to set forth. We shall examine in succession, and in proper order, and with method, all the organs which you ought to study and to know; and shall take occasion to speak of and explain their several diseases—a species of knowledge indispensable to your success and honour in your future career. We shall describe the history and phenomena of conception and gestation; the troubles, and difficulties, and obstructions of pregnancy will be explained to you; and we shall give the history of the fœtus, its growth, dimensions, situation, and, indeed, whatever it is proper to say on that subject in a course of lectures;—and, lastly, we shall reach the subject of parturition and labour. You shall see set before you, in due order and array, all the steps of a natural labour—all your personal duties, and the needful observances as to your own conduct in the lying-in room—all the varieties of natural labour arising from the different states of the mother's conformation, health, strength, courage, and patience, or impatience—all the diversities arising from diverse positions of the fœtus in the womb; and then proceed to the study



of those labours that are difficult, slow, or lingering, with the remedies and appliances for them.

After these shall come the preternatural labours—those that are interrupted, untoward, alarming—requiring the greatest skill whether in manipulations with the human hand alone, or with that hand armed with the forceps, the vectis, the perforator, or the crotchet. You shall have laid before you the history of the forceps, its modifications and late improvements, the indications for its employment, and the manner of using it, to be carefully and fully illustrated upon the machine or phantome, where it can be explained as well as upon the living body. The diseases of the puerperal state will next demand your attention. I shall endeavour, with my whole mind and heart, to warn you and arm you against the dangers that threaten your patients from flooding, from inversions of the womb, from fevers and inflammations. And then comes the child, the object and end of all this great scene. It will require at your hands much counsel and direction ; for its helplessness and feebleness expose it to many dangers, which, if you ward them not off, you suffer all the pains and danger of pregnancy and parturition to have been passed in vain, for the fruit of the womb is lost at last. And so, Gentlemen, proceeding step by step from the lowest grade of the mount, we shall ascend by paths sometimes rough and desolate and dreary, but often beautiful and filled with charming prospects, to the temple which shines afar, perched on the loftiest summit, inaccessible to all but those who resolutely climb.

Here is a sketch of the course I propose to deliver here—will you come along with me, Gentlemen ? But I beg you not to come, unless you come with ingenuous minds—not for my sake, but for the sake of humanity ; a little learning is a dangerous thing, and a great poet says of it, “ Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring ! ” I know, for I have felt, that it is a toil. I know, for I have felt, that the young mind often flags, and is awearied of that plod plodding way which seems so long that it has no end—and, in truth, it has no end. The path of science leads ever onwards ; if it carry you to the next planet, it still stretches onward to the sun, and beyond that to some twinkling fixed star, and yet again to the nebulous confusion of the milky way,—beyond which again, worlds on worlds shine as you go through illimitable space. The holy writer says that too much study is a weariness to the flesh, and of the reading of books there is no end. You must curb that wayward mind.



Do you remember what Virgil says of it? "*Tu rege animum imperio, Hunc tu vinculis hunc tu compesce catena.*"

Yes, Gentlemen, go on—go on! Make yourselves Rabbis and Masters in our Israel. Make yourselves wise, and you shall secure your fortunes. What is the secret—what the talisman for making your fortune? I will tell you what it is: in medicine, in law, in divinity, in politics, in war, the rule is ever the same—make yourself indispensable to men, and your fortune is made. It consists at last, not in vile pelf—not the vile pecunium—not in the quicquid veritur; but in an honest and solid reputation, in sufficient to eat, and in wherewithal to be clothed. Fill your minds with science—store your hearts with love to your fellow-creatures—acquire dexterity in your profession, and your fortune is made; for those who need the exercise of your talents will come even from far countries, to pay you with honour, and gold too, for the benefits you may bestow.

Let me close this lecture by reading to you what a great man said, 2500 years ago:

"A philosophic physician is to be esteemed almost as a divinity; nor indeed is there great difference in whatever characterises them, and whatever really constitutes wisdom is to be found in Medicine: contempt of wealth, modesty, decency, moderation in dress, reflection, judgment, lenity, readiness, cleanliness, eloquence, freedom from superstitious fears, a divine excellence. Their very nature is the opposite of a sordid and grasping profession, an insatiable desire of gain, cupidity, detraction, and impudence." These are high opinions; but they are those of one who has been for ages regarded as the father of all our brethren in Medicine. I mean the sage of Cos—Hippocrates himself!







